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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE FAR EAST.

Committee for Coordination of Investigations
of the Lower Mekong Basin (Cambodia, Laos,
Thailand and the Republic of Viet-Nam)
Thirty-second Session
Monday 3 - Monday 17 April 1967
Tokyo, Japan

PROPOSED NAM NGUM DOCUMENTARY FILM

Note by the Executive Agent

1. Brief Description

It is proposed that the completed film will be a 35mm. colour documentary film about the Nam Ngum project and its construction, with suitable commentary. It is proposed that the duration of the completed film will be in the order of 20-25 minutes.

2. Purposes

The film should serve a number of purposes. The audience for the film should be wide and varied, if the purposes are to be fulfilled. The following are proposed as the primary purposes:

(i) to portray, in a generally comprehensive fashion, the construction of the project; this portrayal should be in sufficient depth to be of interest to engineers, but should not be such that it is of exclusive interest to engineers;

(ii) to portray the significance of the Nam Ngum project for the local population and economy, as an example of a Mekong Committee tributary project;

(iii) to portray the participation of many countries and agencies in the planning, financing and construction of the project;

(iv) to portray, to the people of the Basin, the benefits of such a project.

The film would also have secondary purposes:

(i) to provide, during the course of filming, TV and film news cuts (16mm.) in black and white and/or in color for use in the Basin and for international use through UN/OPI;

/(ii)

(ii) to provide sequences which could be used in a general film on the Mekong Project, at a later date.

3. Content

The following are suggested as suitable material for the film;

(i) sequences (already taken) at the ceremony in which H.M. the King of Laos inaugurated the construction site;

(ii) views of the proposed Nam Ngum access bridge, together with shots of the construction materials being transported to the site;

(iii) sequences taken at the proposed ceremony to inaugurate the Thailand/Laos transmission line linking the Nam Pong and Nam Ngum projects;

(iv) sequences illustrating the participation in the project of the Government and people of Laos, personnel and/or materials from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Japan Netherlands, New Zealand, United States, and Thailand, and of the World Bank and the United Nations through the Mekong Committee.

(v) a series of sequences showing successive stages in the construction of the dam and power station;

(vi) sequences showing the resettlement of families displaced by the reservoir;

(vii) sequences showing the construction workers and their camp;

(viii) sequences showing agricultural experimentation with irrigation at the Vientiane Plain Farm, and the use of pumping (with electric power, preferably) for irrigation water supply; shots of the vientiane Plain areas to be irrigated, according to the plan drawn up by Israel, with the help of Nam Ngum electric power; comparison shots of farmers cultivating without irrigation;

(ix) sequences showing Lao villagers fishing, preferably in the Nam Ngum reservoir;

(x) sequences showing the uses to which Nam Ngum electric power will be put in the town of Vientiane, in the villages, and in manufacturing;

/(xi) shots of

(xi) shots of the ceremony inaugurating the Nam Ngum dam and power station.

This list is not intended to be definitive, inclusive, or comprehensive.

4. Commentary

The commentary might be prepared initially in English and/or French. It is proposed that the film would be made available with dubbed commentaries in the following languages: English, French, Lao, Thai, Khmer, Vietnamese. (The responsibility for writing the commentary might be as detailed below.)

5. Organization and supervision of film production

It is proposed that the broad outline of the film scenario be suggested by the Mekong Committee Secretariat in collaboration with UN/OPI. The Mekong Committee Secretariat, with the assistance of UN/OPI, would retain the right to supervise the making of the film. The Mekong Committee Secretariat in collaboration with UN/OPI would prepare the commentary and arrange for dubbing. The World Bank, on behalf of the signatories to the Nam Ngum Development Fund Agreement, would retain the right to overall approval of the completed film, no part of which should be included without the approval of the Mekong Committee and the Bank.

6. Film Unit

Since the construction of the project will continue until late 1970 or into 1971, it would appear essential that the film unit be able to provide the necessary continuity. It would be also essential that effective supervision as described in para.5 above be maintained throughout the period. A number of alternatives present themselves as regards the selection of a suitable film unit to make the film. In every case it is considered essential that the unit be capable of producing a film of the high quality required for international distribution.

Alternative A: Unit located within the Basin

In the event that a unit capable of meeting the above requirements should prove to be available, this alternative offers the advantages of ease of supervision, close liaison with all parties concerned, and it eliminates the need for a proportionately heavy travel budget. It is therefore essential to determine whether such a

/unit can

unit can be found, before considering alternative B.

Alternative B: Unit located outside the Basin

In the event that no suitable film unit can be found within the Basin, a unit would have to be sought elsewhere. The choice of the unit would depend on (a) assurance that the unit will maintain close contact with the Nam Ngum project authorities, Mekong Committee, and UN/OPI, in spite of the unit's location outside the Basin; (b) the cost implications of travel to and from the Nam Ngum project and Bangkok.

7. Distribution

Distribution of the film could be arranged by the National Mekong Committees within the Basin, by UNIS Bangkok for Basin countries and other ECAFE members and by UN/OPI New York for internatic l distribution. Copies of the film would be available at a price probably around $100 each (16 mm.).

8. Costs

One agency, the Dentsu Co., has calculated the cost of such a film at US $60,000 on the basis of

- 20 minutes length film (1,800 ft.), 35 mm. colour, narrated in both French and English
- 12 trips by film unit from Japan, i.e. three trips per year 1967-70
- prints (16 mm.) available at a cost of $100 each)

The following comments may be made on the Dentsu proposal: a high proportion of the cost must be in the form of travel budget between Japan and the Basin; it is possible that no further trips to the Basin will be required in 1967 (one trip has been made on a no-commitment basis, to film the dam site ceremony in February 1967); it is possible that the project inauguration ceremony will be in 1971; it might be possible to reduce the total number of trips from twelve to eight or ten.

9. Finance

Finance for the film might be obtained from one of the following

/sources:

sources:

(i) Nam Ngum Development Fund, administered by the World Bank;

(ii) All the donor countries participating in the Development Fund, as a supplementary contribution on their part;

(iii) Some of the Development Fund donor countries;

(iv) One of the Development Fund donor countries.

It seems desirable that the film should be financed by or through the Development Fund consortium and the World Bank, to ensure smooth relations between the film unit and the project administration and to satisfy the potentially competitive demands of the project participants. For the latter reason, it seems desirable that the film should be financed by method (i) or (ii) above. In the case of methods (iii) and (iv), conflicts of interest seem certain to arise, and would have to be resolved by the Mekong Committee/World Bank/OPI.

10. Timing

The construction programme for the Nam Ngum project can not be subject to the requirements of a documentary film unit. It is therefore necessary to reach decisions as soon as possible on the preparation of the film and the script, on the method of financing the film, and on the choice of film unit. The obvious occasion for such decisions will arise in Tokyo, between 3 April and 17 April during the ECAFE-Mekong Committee Sessions, when the Mekong Committee and representatives of the World Bank and donor countries will be available together. The film sequences taken by Dentsu at Nam Ngum in February 1967 could be shown at that time, for illustrative purposes.